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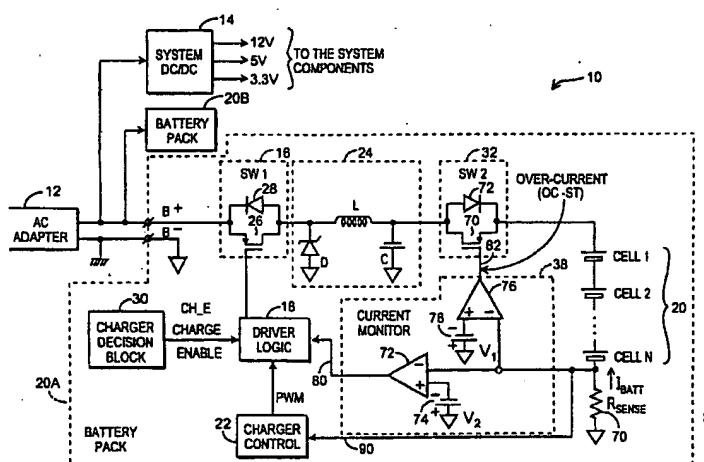
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(54) Title: POWER MANAGEMENT CIRCUIT FOR BATTERY SYSTEMS



(57) Abstract: A power management circuit (10) for battery systems composed of a switch (16, 32) defining a single charge/discharge path. The switch (16, 32) is selectively controlled using analog signals to couple a battery (20) to a power source for charging, or to couple the battery to an active load (14). For charging, the switch is controlled by a controller circuit (18, 22, 30) that monitors the battery voltage, the power source and the individual battery cells. The battery is only coupled to the power source if it is determined that the power source is present and that each of the battery cells is capable of receiving a charge. During discharge, the controller monitors the discharge current from the battery and compares this value to a threshold current. If the discharge current falls below the threshold, the switch is controlled to decouple the battery from the load. In this way, an overcharge condition is avoided if, for example, a power source is reapplied to the system. In a multiple battery system where the battery and battery circuits are connected in parallel to a load and a power source, the use of the threshold current prevents a cross-conduction between batteries.

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POWER MANAGEMENT CIRCUIT FOR BATTERY SYSTEMS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a battery power management circuit. More particularly, the present invention provides a circuit topology that needs only a single path to both charge and discharge batteries, and an intelligent switching mechanism to switch between batteries in a multiple battery system. The present invention has general utility wherever battery charging circuits are employed, and where multiple batteries are used; and specific utility in portable devices, for example, portable computers and the like.

2. Description of Related Art

Numerous battery charging topologies exist in the art. For portable device applications, it is desirable to have charger circuits that both control the battery as a power source and permit charging of the battery when an external power source is available. It is also desirable to reduce the component count, so that the charging/discharging circuit can be implemented with relative ease.

Rechargeable batteries, i.e., secondary batteries, have been widely used to provide electrical power for driving battery powered electronic appliances such as, by way of example, portable radio cassette players, portable computers, camcorders, cellular telephones and other devices. Alkaline batteries such as nickel cadmium (Ni—Cd) or nickel metal hydride (Ni—MH) batteries have been generally used as the secondary battery. Recently, lithium ion (Li-ion) batteries with an organic electrolytic cell have gained popularity in high-end portable electronic devices because they exhibit high energy density, low temperature characteristics, and stable storage capability.

Rechargeable batteries require an electronic charger for recharging depleted batteries. A charger should include an internal charger circuit incorporated into the battery powered appliance. A charger will begin charging the battery whenever the device is powered by alternating current (i.e., AC) power. External battery chargers

1 accepting one or more batteries to be charged, are equipped with an independent power
2 supply and connectors.

3 Although rechargeable batteries have various types of battery chemistry, battery
4 pack voltage, and battery pack capacity, there have been few methods of charging the
5 batteries adopted in battery chargers. Generally, the charging method is either a constant
6 voltage charging process or a constant current charging process. Constant voltage
7 charging applies a constant voltage that is higher in amplitude than the nominal voltage
8 of the battery across the terminals of a battery. Constant voltage charging process is
9 typically used for charging a backup battery where frequent charging and discharging is
10 not occurring. The charging voltage is continuously applied to the battery. On the other
11 hand, the constant current charging process applies a constant current to the battery
12 irrespective of any increase in the voltage across the terminals occurring as the charging
13 progresses. Constant current charging is useful for rapidly charging a battery. Constant
14 current charging however, requires a time limit in order to avoid damage of the battery
15 due to overcharging.

16 U.S. Patent No. 5,898,234 provides a power supply circuit that uses a single
17 switch to control both charging and discharging. The circuit is composed of a switch for
18 enabling and disabling a charge current and a charge control unit for controlling the
19 switch in accordance with the charge current, the switch being provided in a path shared
20 by the charge current and a discharge current and including a power feed status detection
21 unit for detecting a normal supply voltage of an external power supply source, an absence
22 of a supply of a voltage from the external power supply source, and a drop in a voltage
23 supplied by the external power supply source, and the charge control unit controlling
24 charging of the electric battery by controlling the switch while the power feed status
25 detection unit detects the normal supply voltage of the external power supply source,
26 closing the switch when the power feed status detection unit detects an absence of a
27 supply of a voltage from the external power supply source or a drop in a voltage supplied
28 by the external power supply source, so as to form a discharge path connecting the
29 electric battery and a load, thus supplying power from the electric battery to the load via

1 the switch. Significantly, this patent discloses a current sensing circuit that monitors the
2 discharge current from the battery. This circuit includes a sensing portion (via a sense
3 resistor), an A/D converter and a processor. The sensed signal is digitized, and the
4 processor controls the gate of the switch based on this value. One disadvantage of this
5 approach is that digital circuits are inherently slower than analog circuits. When an
6 external AC adapter is removed from the system, the battery will provide power to the
7 load. However, this does not happen instantaneously. Thus, to energize the load during
8 transition from external power to battery power, the system DC/DC converter includes a
9 capacitor that bleeds energy into the load during this period. The longer the period, the
10 larger the capacitor must be. Thus, in the digital switching topology provided in this
11 patent, it is required to have a substantially large capacitor to supply power to the load
12 during the transitional period. Since it is desirable in portable applications to reduce both
13 component count and component size, it would be undesirable to utilize a digital
14 switching topology for these applications.

15 Similarly, U.S. Patent No. 5,903,137 issued to Freiman et al. provides a battery
16 pack for use in a portable computing system includes a transistor that is used both for
17 inhibiting charging of the batteries within the system and for limiting the voltage across
18 the batteries in the battery pack. Rather than having two separate devices to inhibit and
19 regulate, this single transistor performs the functions of both, thus reducing component
20 count in a battery pack.

21 In U.S. Patent No. 5,994,875, issued to Lee, a battery charging apparatus is
22 provided for use with batteries that require charging in a constant current mode and/or
23 constant voltage mode. The charging apparatus includes a constant current charging
24 control circuit converting the charging current supplied with the battery into a voltage
25 signal and applying the voltage signal to a feedback input terminal of a switching
26 regulator in response to a charging speed control signal $F_{\text{---}}Q$, and a constant voltage
27 charging control circuit providing a control signal to the feedback input terminal for
28 controlling constant voltage charging if the battery voltage level has reached a preset
29 voltage level, whereby a constant voltage charging is possible during the charging

1 operation in response to a charging mode selection signal CHG__MOD. A
2 microcomputer produces the charging mode selection signal CHG__MOD when it is
3 detected the charging voltage of the battery in the constant current mode and the detected
4 voltage reached to a preset level in order to convert the charging mode into the constant
5 voltage mode. Further, a charging speed control signal F__Q is produced to enable the
6 switching regulator to perform quick charging operation. With this arrangement, the
7 constant voltage (CV) charging mode can be performed when the battery is in the preset
8 condition, regardless of type of batteries. In addition, by provision of a protection circuit,
9 possible damage of the CV charging control circuit due to the excessive static or surge is
10 effectively prevented. Other charging topologies can be found in U.S. Patent Nos.
11 5,694,025 and 5,969,436.

12 However, each of these charging circuits require complex components to
13 implement, and are thus costly to manufacture. Indeed, increased pressure exists to
14 provide smaller and smaller components for portable devices, since overall board space
15 and packaging requirements is at a premium. Moreover, none of these references control
16 battery discharge by comparing the discharge current to a preset (programmable)
17 threshold current.

18 In a single battery system, the prior art examples described above cannot
19 instantaneously control the charge/discharge switch to prevent an overcurrent condition
20 on the battery if the external power source is reapplied to the system. For example,
21 external power removed removed, the voltage at the battery and the voltage at the
22 common node of the battery and power source are equal (or very nearly equal). In each
23 of the aforementioned references, as described above, switch 26 is conducting to permit
24 the battery to discharge. If an AC/DC adapter is then applied to the system, these
25 voltages are still equal, but the switch is still open, which can generate damaging currents
26 into the battery.

27 Likewise, in a multiple battery system, a cross conduction between batteries can
28 occur if the switches associated with two (or more batteries) are permitted to
29 simultaneously conduct. For example, assume a two battery system where the power

1 source is removed. Referring again to the '137 patent, which discloses a charger
2 topology for multiple batteries. At the time the adapter is removed, all batteries will
3 attempt to supply power to the system. Since all battery currents are greater than power
4 source current, thus the switches 26 will be conducting. However, if one battery has a
5 greater potential than another battery, but both are conducting through the switch, there
6 will be a cross conductance between batteries.

7 Thus, there is a need to provide a relatively simple circuit topology that prevents
8 these situations, yet satisfies both economy of scale and space requirements.

9 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 Accordingly, the present invention solves the aforementioned drawbacks of the
11 prior art by providing a battery charging/discharging circuit that controls both the
12 charging power supplied to the battery, and the discharging power provided by the
13 battery. Unlike the aforementioned prior art references, the present invention controls the
14 battery discharge by comparing the discharge current to a programmable threshold
15 current. In this way, the circuit of the present invention prevents an overcharge condition
16 on the battery when an adapter is present. Additionally, in a multiple battery system, by
17 controlling battery discharge by comparing the discharge current to a programmable
18 threshold current, the present invention prohibits cross-conduction between batteries of
19 different potential.

20 In one embodiment, the present invention provides a battery charging/discharging
21 circuit comprising: a switch for selectively coupling a battery to a system along a
22 charging/discharging path, or coupling the battery to a power source along the
23 charging/discharging path. A switch controller is provided for selectively controlling the
24 conduction state of the switch comprising a charge enable signal generator circuit for
25 generating a first control signal indicative of the presence of the power source and the
26 charge status of the battery, and a current comparator generating a second control signal
27 indicative of the current being discharged by the battery; wherein the conduction state of
28 the switch being controlled by said first or second control signal. In the most preferred
29 embodiment, the current comparator compares the current being discharged by the

1 battery to a programmable threshold current, where if the threshold current exceeds the
2 discharge current, the conduction state of the switch will be controlled so as to
3 electrically isolate the battery from the system.

4 It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that although the following
5 Detailed Description will proceed with reference being made to preferred embodiments
6 and methods of use, the present invention is not intended to be limited to these preferred
7 embodiments and methods of use. Rather, the present invention is of broad scope and is
8 intended to be limited as only set forth in the accompanying claims.

9 Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent as
10 the following Detailed Description proceeds, and upon reference to the Drawings,
11 wherein like numerals depict like parts, and wherein:

12 Brief Description of the Drawings

13 Figure 1 is an exemplary circuit diagram of a single-path battery
14 charging/discharging circuit of the present invention;

15 Figure 2 is an exemplary circuit diagram of the switch control logic of the present
16 invention; and

17 Figure 3 is an exemplary circuit diagram for obtaining a charging/discharging
18 control signal of FIG. 1.

19 Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

20 An exemplary battery charging/discharging circuit 10 is depicted in Figure 1.
21 The circuit generally includes a battery 20 comprising a plurality of battery cells Cell1,
22 Cell2...Celln, a buck converter circuit 24 for charging the battery 20, a switches 16 and
23 32, switch control circuitry comprising a charger decision circuit 30, driver logic 18 and a
24 charger controller 22, and a current monitor circuit. A system DC/DC converter 14 is
25 connected to the circuit 10 for supplying a predetermined voltage to a system. The
26 converter 14 is coupled to the AC adapter 12 and to one or more battery systems 20A,
27 20B, etc., for supplying power thereto. Converter 14 typically generates a plurality of
28 DC source voltages (e.g., 12V, 5V, 3.3V, etc.) as power supplies to an electronic device.
29 As an overview, if the AC/DC adapter 12 is present and supplying power to the system,

1 the circuit 10 determines if the batteries need charging and are capable of taking a charge,
2 and if so, the switch controller 18 opens switch 16 to permit the AC/DC adapter to
3 provide charging current to the batteries 20, as well as supply power to the system 14.
4 Also, by monitoring the current output of the battery cells 20, switch 32 is controlled so
5 as to prevent a short circuit condition on the battery. As a further overview, the circuit
6 10 of Figure 1 is preferably adapted to monitor both the presence (or absence) of an
7 external power source (e.g., an AC/DC adapter) and the individual cells of a battery as
8 conditions for charging and discharging the battery. If the battery 20 is of the Lithium
9 ion type, very strict charging tolerances must be employed, since it is possible to explode
10 the battery if they are overcharged. Thus, the present invention monitors the voltage of
11 each cell of the battery to ensure that an overcharge situation does not occur. These
12 features are described in more detail below.

13 Referring to Figures 1 and 3, the charger decision block 30 generates a charge
14 enable signal 30 based on the voltage at the B+ node, and the individual voltages of the
15 battery cells, as described below. The charge enable signal is used to control the overall
16 operation of the circuit of Figure 1. In simplest form, the preferred circuit shown for the
17 charger decision block 30 in Figure 3 is comprised of a first comparator 50 and one or
18 more second comparators 52, 54, and 56 (one for each cell, Cell1, Cell2...Celln, of the
19 battery 20), and AND gates 58 and 60. The first comparator 50 compares the battery
20 voltage V_{Batt_n} with the node voltage V_{B+} , to determine if an AC/DC adapter 12 is present
21 (i.e. connected to nodes B+ and B-). If $V_{B+} > V_{Batt_n}$ then comparator 50 generates a high
22 output signal, since this indicates that an adapter is present. Thus, comparator 50
23 operates to determine the greatest voltage at the B+ and B- nodes. The output signal of
24 comparator 50 is one input of AND gate 60, as shown. Comparators 52, 54 and 56
25 monitor the individual battery cell voltages, V_{cell1} , V_{cell2} ... V_{celln} , respectively, and
26 compare the cell voltages to a programmable threshold voltage V_{Thresh} . For typical
27 Lithium ion batteries, the maximum charge tolerated on any cell is about 4.300 volts.
28 Thus, it is preferably that V_{Thresh} be a value below this maximum voltage. For example,
29 V_{Thresh} can be programmed at 4.200 Volts (+/- 50 mV.). Of course, this is just an

1 example, and V_{Thresh} can be set to any appropriate amount, as required. In any case, it is
2 preferable to have a high precision voltage generator (not shown) to generate V_{Thresh} . If
3 $V_{Thresh} >$ each of V_{cell1} , $V_{cell2} \dots V_{celln}$, then comparators 52, 54 and 56 generate a high
4 output signal which is feed into AND gate 58. The output of AND gate 58 will, of course,
5 be likewise high. If any of V_{cell1} , $V_{cell2} \dots V_{celln}$ are $> V_{Thresh}$, then the output of AND gate
6 58 is low. The output of AND gate 58 is another input to AND gate 60. The output of
7 AND gate 60 is the charge enable signal 30. Only if $V_{Batt} > V_{B+}$ and $V_{Thresh} >$ each of
8 V_{cell1} , $V_{cell2} \dots V_{celln}$ will the charge enable signal 30 be high. Charge enable signal 30 is
9 an input to the driver logic circuitry 18, and generally controls whether the battery 20 will
10 receive a charge from the adapter 12.

11 One feature of the present invention is that a single path is used for both charging
12 and discharging of the batteries. To accomplish this, the present invention utilizes
13 switches 16 and 32, which are controlled for both charging and discharging operations.
14 The conduction state of switch 16 is controlled by the driver logic 18, which utilizes the
15 charge enable signal 30, a pulse signal generated by the PWM controller 22, and a signal
16 generated by the current monitor. The preferred switch 16 is comprised off a transistor
17 26 and a body diode 28. The body diode 28 is in reverse bias with respect to the power
18 adapter 12, thereby ensuring that no leakage current is feed into the battery 20. However,
19 to minimize power loss across the body diode 28, it is important to control the transistor
20 26 so that it is ON when the battery is charging and discharging. Similarly, switch 32 is
21 provided to prevent current from flowing from the battery if there is a short circuit
22 condition at terminals B+/B-. Switch 32 comprises transistor 70 and body diode 72.
23 The body diode is in forward bias with respect to the power adapter 12. Switch 70 is
24 controlled so that during a normal charge or discharge operation, it is in a conduction
25 state, i.e., to permit current to flow into and out of the battery 20. If, however, the
26 discharge current gets beyond a predetermined threshold, transistor 70 is controlled to
27 turn OFF. By way of example, the following is a description of the charging state and
28 discharging state of the circuit shown in Figures 1 and 2.

1 Battery Charging - Charge Enable Signal is High

2 As noted above, the conduction state of transistor 26 is controlled by the driver
3 logic 18, which in turn is a function of the charge enable signal 30 and a battery current
4 signal 80. Figure 2 depicts an example of the driver logic circuit 18 of the present
5 invention. By way of example, and referring to Figures 1 and 2, we assume that charge
6 enable is high, i.e., the adapter 12 is present and the individual cells of the battery 20 are
7 capable of taking a charge. In this case, the output of AND gate 42 is commensurate with
8 the PWM signal, as generated by PWM controller 22. The charge enable signal is also an
9 input to AND gate 44, via inverter 46, thus generating the compliment of the charge
10 enable signal. Since charge enable is high at this time, the output of AND gate 44 is low.
11 The output of gates 42 and 44 are feed into OR gate 40. Switch 26 alternately conducts
12 to provide a charge path for the adapter 12 to supply power to the buck converter 24,
13 thereby generating a charging current to the battery 20. During charging body diode 28 is
14 in reverse bias, and the charging path is defined through switch 26. Switch 26 is
15 preferably a MOS transistor, the gate of which is controlled by the output of OR gate 34,
16 as shown. The PWM controller 22 is controlled by a battery feedback signal 90
17 indicative of the charge voltage on the battery. Signal 90 dictates the power supplied by
18 the charger controller by adjusting the width of the PWM signal.

19 Under these conditions, the current monitor circuit 38 also controls switch 70 so
20 that it conducts during charging, as follows. Current monitor circuit 38 preferably
21 comprises a first comparator 76 and second comparator 72, as shown. Comparator 76
22 compares the voltage across the sense resistor 70 to voltage V1. T Comparator 76 is
23 utilized to close switch 70 if the discharge current becomes greater than a predetermined
24 value, otherwise switch 70 is held in a conducting state. Thus, V1 is chosen to equal I_{\max}
25 $\times R_{\text{sense}}$. I_{\max} is chosen as the maximum allowable discharge current for that battery, and
26 typically equals 6 A. Comparator 76 compares V1 to $V_{R\text{-sense}}$, and if $V1 > V_{R\text{-sense}}$,
27 comparator generates control signal 82 to hold switch 70 ON (i.e., conducting).
28 Conversely, if $V1 < V_{R\text{-sense}}$, comparator generates control signal 82 to hold switch 70
29 OFF (i.e., not conducting). Comparator 76 is provided to prevent an overcurrent

1 condition on the battery, i.e., short-circuit condition. During a charging period, note that
2 output 80 of the current monitor 38 is irrelevant, since the output of AND gate 44 is
3 always LOW (i.e., since charge enable signal 48' is LOW).

4 Battery Discharging – Charge Enable Signal is Low

5 Assuming now that the charge enable signal is LOW. In the present example,
6 charge enable can go low if: 1) the adapter 12 is removed from the circuit, thereby
7 making the output of comparator 50 low (Figure 3), since the voltage at the B+ node is
8 less than the battery voltage; and/or 2) any one of the battery cells Cell1, Cells,...Celln is
9 larger than the preset threshold voltage. (Note, however, that for this second condition,
10 this does not necessarily mean that the battery is discharging). In both these conditions,
11 the output of AND gate 42 is LOW. The charge enable signal 48' is input into AND gate
12 44. During the transition period between removal of the adapter 12 and supplying
13 battery power to system 14 via transistor 26, the battery power discharge path is defined
14 through the body diode 28 and transistor 70. However, since the power loss through a
15 diode is much greater than that of a transistor (i.e., $P_D \gg P_{MOS}$), it is desirable to ensure
16 that the battery does not discharge through the diode 28 for extended periods (e.g., more
17 than 2ms.). Accordingly, the current monitor 38 also supplies an enabling signal 80 to
18 AND gate 44, as described below. The second comparator 72 of the current monitor 38a
19 compares the battery voltage across sense resistor R_{sense} with a predetermined threshold
20 voltage V_2 . V_2 is a threshold voltage, indicative of a battery discharge state, and can be
21 generalized by a threshold current $I_{Thresh} \times R_{sense}$. Typically, I_{Thresh} is 0.3 A. If the
22 battery discharge current is greater than the threshold, the output of comparator 72 is
23 high. In this case, the output of AND gate 44 is high, thus causing transistor 26 to be ON
24 and conducting. The discharge path is now defined through the transistors 26 and 70.
25 Likewise, if I_{Batt} is less than I_{Thresh} , the output of comparator 72 is low, thereby causing
26 switch 26 to turn off. It is desirable to set the threshold at a value less than the minimal
27 turn on voltage for body diode 28, thereby minimizing leakage currents across body
28 diode 28 when switch 26 is OFF. Also, To prevent an over-discharge state for the

1 battery 20, I_{Thresh} is preferably a programmable value that is chosen in accordance with
2 the particular battery used.

3 In a single battery system, the use of the current comparator 38, and specifically
4 the use of a threshold current to control switch 26, prevents an uncontrolled current from
5 entering the battery if the system adapter 12 is reapplied. For example, with the system
6 adapter 12 removed, the voltage at the battery V_{Batt} and the voltage at node B+ are equal
7 (or very nearly equal). And, as described above, switch 26 is conducting to permit the
8 battery to discharge. If an AC/DC adapter is then applied to node B+, these voltages are
9 still equal, but the switch 26 is still conducting, which can generate damaging currents
10 into the battery. To prevent this situation, the current comparator continually monitors
11 the battery current I_{Batt} with a threshold current. If, in the situation as described above,
12 both a battery current (positive current) and an AC/DC adapter current (negative current)
13 exist across the sense resistor, these two currents will reduce the value of I_{Batt} to below
14 the threshold value, thereby generating a low output from the current comparator 38, and
15 turning switch 26 off. Notice, that when switch 26 is off, body diode 28 is in reverse bias
16 with respect to node B+ (i.e., to any other power source).

17 Multiple Battery Systems

18 Another advantage of the present invention over conventional battery
19 charging/discharging topologies is that the circuit of the present invention can be adapted
20 for multiple battery systems. Referring again to Figure 1, each battery pack 20A, 20B,
21 etc, preferably duplicates the circuit 10 and the circuits shown in Figures 2 and 3, and
22 each are coupled in parallel at nodes B+ and B-. Of course, it is not necessary to
23 duplicate such common elements as the charger circuit 22. Thus, the voltage value at
24 node $V_{\text{B+}}$ could be indicative of either the presence of an external AC/DC adapter, or
25 another battery source. Since, as described above, the battery only discharges if it's
26 voltage is greater than the node voltage at B+. In this way, it is assured that the power
27 source with the highest voltage (either an adapter, a Battery 20A or another battery 20B)
28 assumes the role of supplying power to the system. Thus, for multiple battery systems,
29 the operation of the circuitry described herein for a single battery is substantially

1 identical, except that now if the B+ node is highest as seen by a particular battery, then
2 this indicates that both the adapter is not present and that the other battery has less
3 voltage.

4 As with the single battery system of Figure 1, the current monitor 38 in the
5 multiple battery system prevents a cross-conduction between batteries of different
6 potentials. For example, assume a two battery system where the power adapter 12 is
7 removed. At the time the adapter is removed, both batteries will attempt to supply power
8 to the system, since in both circuits 10 the battery current is greater than the threshold
9 current, and thus the switches 26 will be conducting. However, if battery A has a greater
10 potential than battery B, but battery B is still conducting through switch 26, there will be
11 a cross conductance from battery A into battery B. In the present invention, this will
12 cause a negative current across the sense resistor, which, when added to the battery
13 current, will cause the total current monitored by the comparator 72 to fall below the
14 threshold value, thereby causing the switch 26 to close, and that battery to cease
15 supplying power.

16 It should be noted that in either the single battery or multiple battery topologies, it
17 is preferable to choose a current threshold value, I_{thresh} , that is very small with respect to
18 the maximum power dissipation on the switch 16. For example, it may be desirable to
19 choose a threshold value of between 0 to 100mA, for a switch having maximum power
20 dissipation of 1 Watt.

21 Importantly, the operation and control of the first switch 16, and in particular the
22 operation and control of the transistor 26 is purely analog. Thus, the present invention
23 permits very fast switch times between power delivery by the adapter 12, and power
24 deliver by battery 20A (or 20B). Also, since the preferred driver logic (Figure2) is
25 implemented using relatively few components, the present invention achieves switch
26 times in the μ sec. range. Additionally, the fast switch times realized by the present
27 invention permit power delivery to the load without the need for a large system capacitor
28 to energize the system during switch times.

1 Thus, it is evident that there has been provided battery power management circuit
2 topology that requires only a single path to both charge and discharge batteries, and an
3 intelligent switching mechanism to switch between batteries in a multiple battery system.
4 Those skilled in the art will recognize that many modifications are possible. For
5 example, and referring to Figure 1B, the current comparator 38' can include a comparator
6 70 and a threshold voltage source 72, which generates a voltage proportional to a
7 threshold current, i.e., $V_{\text{thresh}} = I_{\text{thresh}} \times R_{\text{sense}}$.

8 Other modifications are possible. For example the exemplary control logic of
9 Figure 2 could likewise be implemented with other gate technology (e.g., NAND, NOR,
10 etc.) while accomplishing the same function. Alternately, the circuit of Figure 2 could be
11 replaced with a programmed IC acting as a state machine, as a function of the appropriate
12 inputs.

13 Still other modifications are possible. For example, although Figure 3 represents
14 a two battery system, it should be noted that the topology of Figures 1 and 2 can be
15 duplicated for any number of batteries, and each being connected in parallel at node B+.
16 These and all other modifications as may be apparent to one skilled in the art are deemed
17 within the spirit and scope of the present invention, only as limited by the appended
18 claims.

19

CLAIMS

- 1
2 1. A battery charging/discharging circuit comprising:
3 a switch for selectively coupling a battery to a load along a charging/discharging
4 path, or coupling said battery to a power source along said charging/discharging path; and
5 an analog switch controller for selectively controlling the conduction state of said
6 switch comprising a charge enable signal generator circuit for generating a first control
7 signal indicative of the presence of said power source and the charging status of said
8 battery, and a current comparator for comparing a threshold current to a battery discharge
9 current and for generating a second control signal indicative of the battery discharge
10 current; wherein the conduction state of said switch being controlled by said first or
11 second control signal.
- 12 2. A circuit as claimed in claim 1, wherein said switch comprising a MOSFET
13 transistor and a diode in parallel with said transistor, said diode being in forward bias
14 between said battery and said system.
- 15 3. A circuit as claimed in claim 1, wherein said power source includes an AC/DC
16 adapter.
- 17 4. A circuit as claimed in claim 1, wherein said charge/discharging path comprises a
18 converter circuit for generating a DC charging current from said power source, and a
19 sense impedance for sensing said current being discharged by said battery.
- 20 5. A circuit as claimed in claim 4, wherein said converter circuit includes a buck
21 converter circuit comprising an inductor coupled to said switch and said battery, a
22 capacitor coupled to said inductor and a reference voltage, and a diode coupled to said
23 inductor and said reference voltage and being in forward bias with respect to said
24 reference voltage.
- 25 6. A circuit as claimed in claim 1, wherein said battery comprises a plurality of
26 individual battery cells having individual voltages.
- 27 7. A circuit as claimed in claim 6, wherein said charge enable signal generating
28 circuit comprising a plurality of first comparator circuits for comparing the voltage of
29 each said battery cell to a threshold voltage and each generating a plurality of first output

1 signals, a first AND gate receiving said first output signals and generating a second
2 output signal, a second comparator for comparing the battery voltage and the power
3 source voltage and generating a third output signal, and a second AND gate receiving
4 said second and third output signals and generating a forth output signal; said current
5 comparator comprising a comparator circuit comparing discharge current supplied by
6 said battery and a threshold current and generating a fifth output signal.

7 8. A circuit as claimed in claim 7, wherein said switch controller comprises a third
8 AND gate receiving fourth output signal and a pulse signal and generating said first
9 control signal, a fourth AND gate receiving the compliment of said fourth output signal
10 and said fifth output signal and generating said second control signal, and an OR gate
11 receiving said first and second control signals and selectively switching the conduction
12 state of said switch based on said first or second control signals.

13 9. A multiple battery system for delivering power to a load, comprising
14 two or more batteries each having a charge/discharge circuit, respectively, each
15 said charge/discharge circuit being connected in parallel with a load;
16 a power source coupled in parallel to said load and said batteries;
17 said charge/discharge circuit comprising:
18 a switch selectively coupling said battery to a power source to charge said battery,
19 or coupling said battery to said load;
20 an analog switch controller for controlling the conduction state of said switch
21 comprising a charge enable signal generating circuit for coupling said battery to said
22 power source and to a modulated signal source, and a current comparator for comparing a
23 battery discharge current to a threshold current and coupling said battery to said system
24 based on the comparison of said battery discharge current and said threshold current.

25 10. A circuit as claimed in claim 9, wherein said switch comprising a transistor and a
26 diode in parallel with said transistor, said diode being in forward bias between said
27 battery and said system.

28 11. A circuit as claimed in claim 9, wherein said power source includes an AC/DC
29 adapter.

1 12. A circuit as claimed in claim 9, wherein said charge/discharging path comprises a
2 converter circuit for generating a DC charging current from said power source, and a
3 sense impedance for sensing said current being discharged by said battery.

4 13. A circuit as claimed in claim 12, wherein said converter circuit includes a buck
5 converter circuit comprising an inductor coupled to said switch and said battery, a
6 capacitor coupled to said inductor and a reference voltage, and a diode coupled to said
7 inductor and said reference voltage and being in forward bias with respect to said
8 reference voltage.

9 14. A circuit as claimed in claim 9, wherein said battery comprises a plurality of
10 individual battery cells having individual voltages.

11 15. A circuit as claimed in claim 14, wherein said charge enable signal generating
12 circuit comprising a plurality of first comparator circuits for comparing the voltage of
13 each said battery cell to a threshold voltage and each generating a plurality of first output
14 signals, a first AND gate receiving said first output signals and generating a second
15 output signal, a second comparator for comparing the battery voltage and the power
16 source voltage and generating a third output signal, and a second AND gate receiving
17 said second and third output signals and generating a forth output signal; said current
18 comparator comprising a comparator circuit comparing discharge current supplied by
19 said battery and a threshold current and generating a fifth output signal.

20 16. A circuit as claimed in claim 15, wherein said switch controller comprises a third
21 AND gate receiving fourth output signal and a pulse signal and generating said first
22 control signal, a fourth AND gate receiving the compliment of said fourth output signal
23 and said fifth output signal and generating said second control signal, and an OR gate
24 receiving said first and second control signals and selectively switching the conduction
25 state of said switch based on said first or second control signals.

26 17. A method for controlling the charging and discharging of a battery, said method
27 comprising the steps of:

28 coupling a battery to a load along a charging/discharging path through a switch,

- 1 coupling said battery to a power source along said charging/discharging path
2 through said switch;
3 generating a first analog control signal indicative of the presence of said power
4 source and the charging status of said battery;
5 generating a second analog control signal indicative of the battery discharge
6 current; and selectively controlling the conduction state of said switch using said first
7 or second control signal.
- 8 18. A method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the step of generating a DC
9 charging current from said power source.
- 10 19. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said battery comprises a plurality of
11 battery cells, wherein generating said first analog control signal comprising the steps of:
12 comparing the voltage of each said battery cell to a threshold voltage and each
13 generating a plurality of first output signals;
14 ANDing said first output signals and generating a second output signal;
15 comparing the battery voltage and the power source voltage and generating a third
16 output signal;
17 ANDing said second and third output signals and generating a forth output signal;
18 ANDing said fourth output signal and a pulse width modulated signal and
19 generating said first analog control signal.
- 20 20. A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein generating said second analog control
21 signal comprising the steps of:
22 comparing said discharge current supplied by said battery and a threshold current
23 and generating a fifth output signal; and
24 ANDing the compliment of said fourth output signal and said fifth output signal
25 and generating said second control signal,
- 26 21. A method as claimed in claim 20, further comprising the step of
27 ORing said first and second analog control signals and selectively switching the
28 conduction state of said switch based on said first or second control signals.

- 1 22. A circuit as claimed in claim 8, wherein said circuit further comprising a charger
2 control circuit generating said pulse signal, and a feedback signal coupled to said charger
3 control circuit representing the voltage across said battery, wherein the duty cycle of said
4 pulse signal being adjusted by said feedback signal.
- 5 23. A circuit as claimed in claim 22, wherein said charger control circuit comprises a
6 pulse width modulator and said pulse signal comprises a pulse width modulated signal.
- 7 24. A circuit as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a second switch coupled
8 between said switch and said battery along said charge/discharge path for selectively
9 coupling said battery to said load or said power source; and
10 a second analog switch controller for selectively controlling the conduction state
11 of said second switch comprising a comparator for comparing a maximum battery
12 discharge current to said battery discharge current and generating a third control signal
13 indicative of said battery discharge current; wherein the conduction state of said second
14 switch being controlled by said third control signal.
- 15 25. A circuit as claimed in claim 24, wherein said switch comprising a MOSFET
16 transistor and a diode in parallel with said transistor, said diode being in forward bias
17 between said system and said battery.
- 18 26. A circuit as claimed in claim 16, wherein said circuit further comprising a charger
19 control circuit generating said pulse signal, and a feedback signal coupled to said charger
20 control circuit representing the voltage across said battery, wherein the duty cycle of said
21 pulse signal being adjusted by said feedback signal.
- 22 27. A circuit as claimed in claim 26, wherein said charger control circuit comprises a
23 pulse width modulator and said pulse signal comprises a pulse width modulated signal.
- 24 28. A circuit as claimed in claim 9, further comprising a second switch coupled
25 between said switch and said battery along said charge/discharge path for selectively
26 coupling said battery to said load or said power source; and
27 a second analog switch controller for selectively controlling the conduction state
28 of said second switch comprising a comparator for comparing a maximum battery
29 discharge current to said battery discharge current and generating a third control signal

1 indicative of said battery discharge current; wherein the conduction state of said second
2 switch being controlled by said third control signal.

3 29. A circuit as claimed in claim 28, wherein said switch comprising a MOSFET
4 transistor and a diode in parallel with said transistor, said diode being in forward bias
5 between said system and said battery.

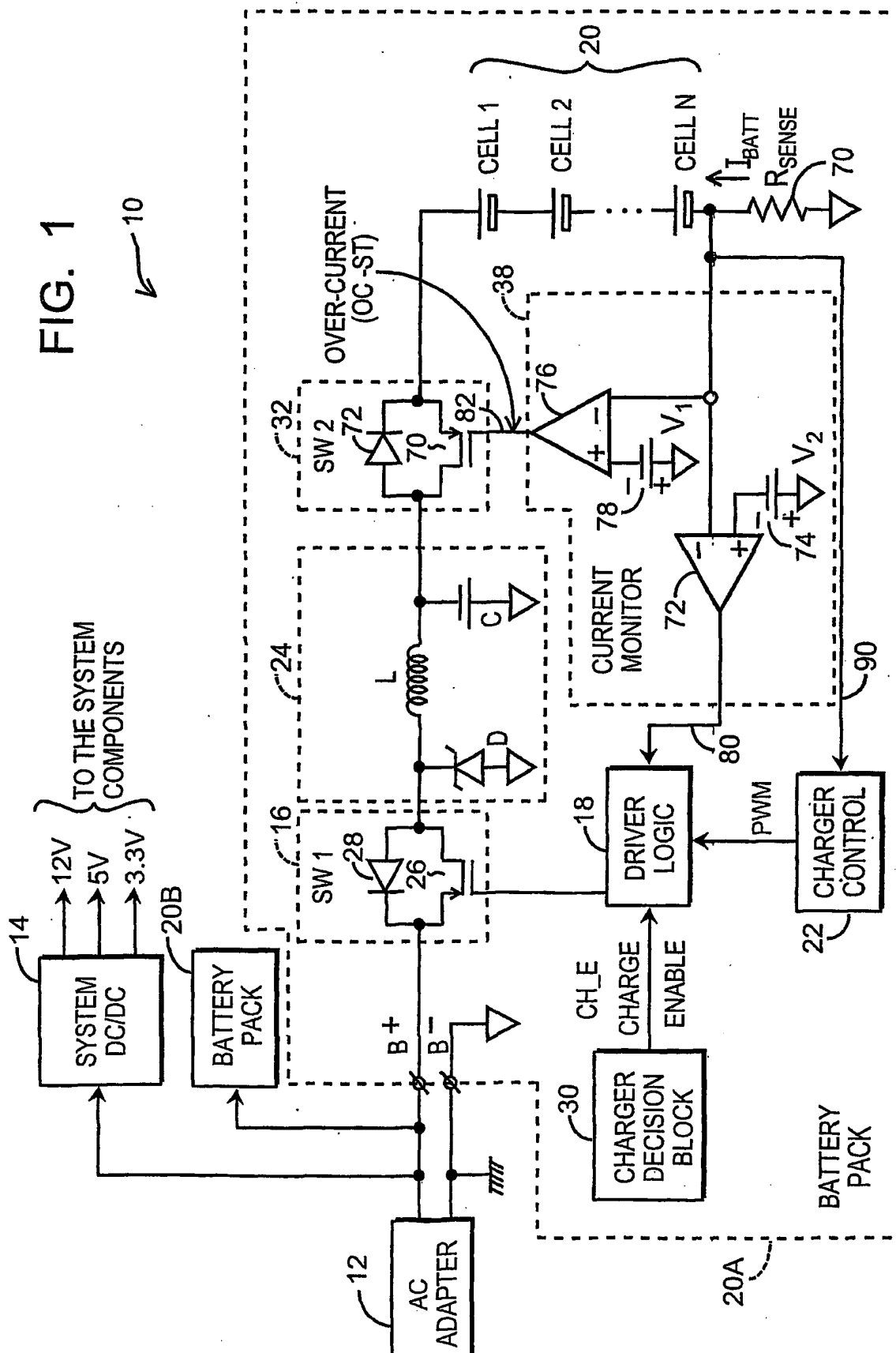
6 30. A method as claimed in claim 19, further comprising the steps of coupling said
7 pulse width modulated signal to said switch and generating a battery charging signal to
8 deliver charging current to said battery when said battery is coupled to said power source
9 through said switch.

10 31. A method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the steps of:
11 coupling said battery to said load or said power source through a second switch
12 along said charging/discharging path;
13 generating a third control signal indicative of the discharge current generated by
14 said battery; and
15 selectively controlling the conduction state of said second switch using said third
16 control signal.

17 32. A method as claimed in claim 31, wherein generating said third control signal
18 comprises the step of comparing said discharge current to a maximum permitted
19 discharge current; wherein if said discharge current is less than said maximum discharge
20 current, said conduction state of said second switch is closed to permit current to enter or
21 exit said battery; and wherein if said discharge current exceeds said maximum permitted
22 discharge current, said conduction state of said second switch is opened to create an open
23 circuit between said battery, and said power supply and said load.

24 33. A method as claimed in claim 30, further comprising the steps of:
25 generating a feedback signal indicative of the current delivered to said battery;
26 and
27 adjusting the duty cycle of said pulse width modulated signal based on said
28 feedback signal.

FIG. 1



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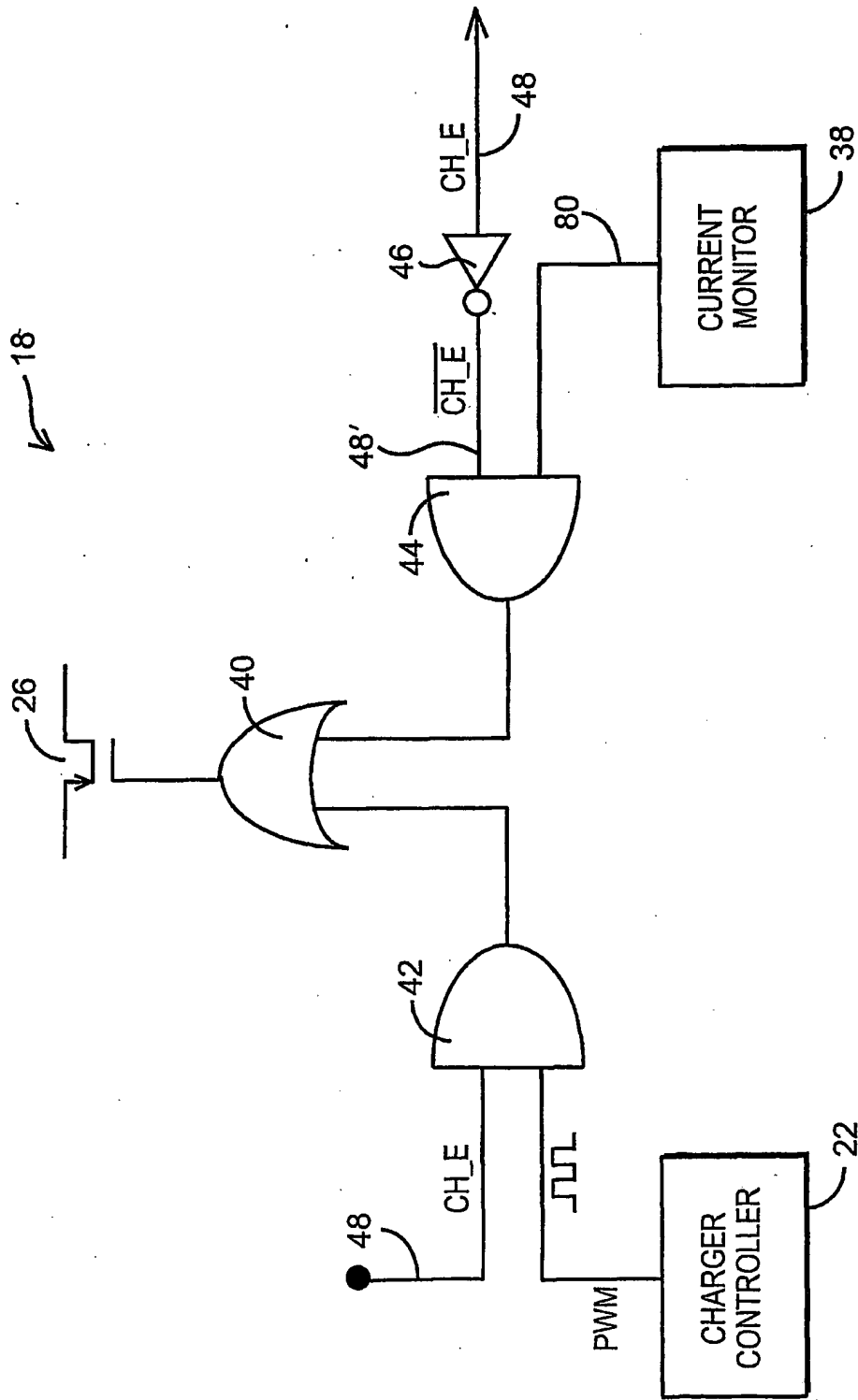


FIG. 2

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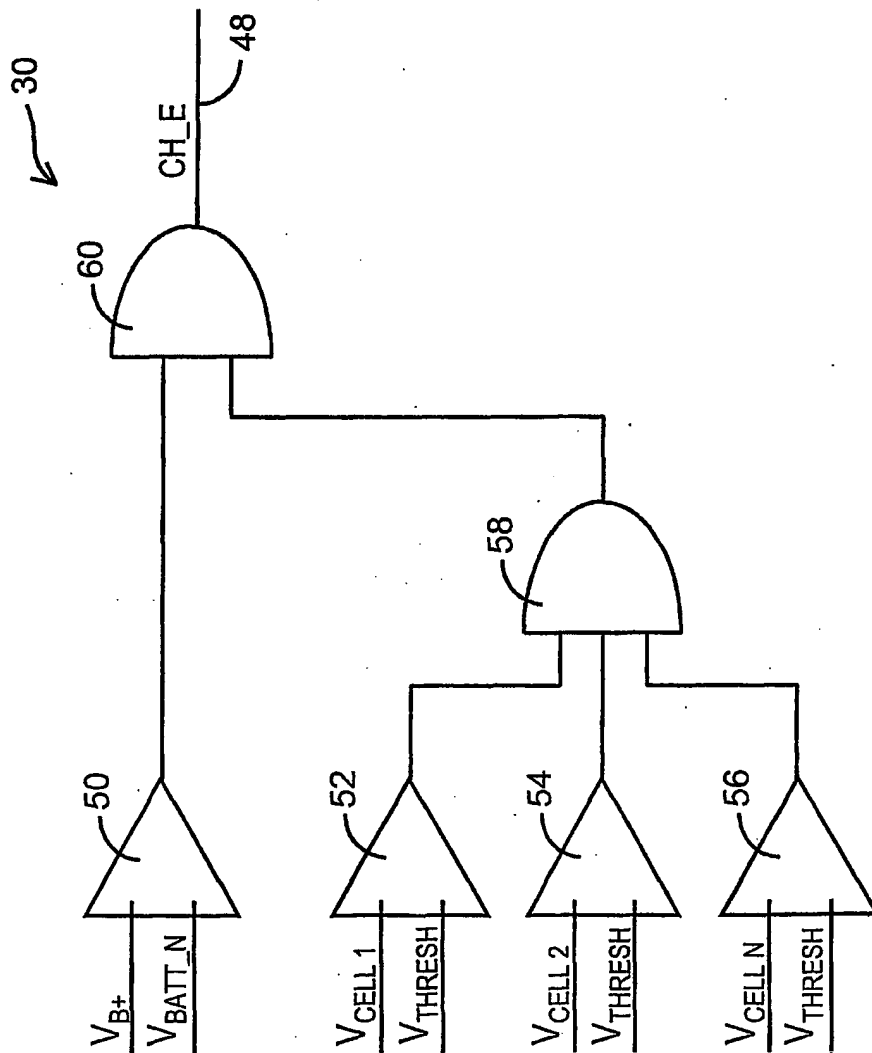


FIG. 3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US01/23254

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :H01M 10/46

US CL :320/128

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 320/118, 128, 134-136, DIG 12

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
NONEElectronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
NONE**C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X — A	US 5,898,234 A (KITAGAWA) 27 April 1999 (27.04.1999), abstract and figs. 5-7.	1-6; 9-14, 17, 18 7, 8, 15, 16, 19-33



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:		"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
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"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search

26 SEPTEMBER 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

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